

Study tests new strapping device for people with vertebral fractures linked to osteoporosis

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(Medical Xpress)—Researchers are investigating the effects of a new strapping device for people who have osteoporosis - weakening of the bones - and have suffered a fracture of one of the bones in their back.

The research by UWE Bristol and the University of Bristol will be carried out at North Bristol NHS Trust (NBT) and is being funded by the NBT Springboard Fund and the National Osteoporosis Society.

Shea Palmer, Professor of Musculoskeletal Rehabilitation at UWE Bristol, who is leading the research, said, "Osteoporosis is common in older people and fracture of the vertebrae is a potentially serious complication, most commonly by them becoming 'squashed' following fairly minor things such as bending, sneezing or stumbling.

"It is estimated that 120,000 vertebral fractures occur in the UK each year and that more than 20 per cent of people over the age of 50 have evidence of damage to vertebrae. Many people do not even know that they have caused damage but others have a lot of [pain](#). This can affect people's ability to do day-to-day activities and reduce their overall quality of life."

As vertebrae are damaged, it is common for people to become more stooped over and this puts even more stress and strain on the spine, causing more pain and an increased risk of further vertebral fractures.

There is some evidence that the use of corrective strapping can help people to stay more upright.

According to the researchers, this might reduce pain and help people to do day-to-day activities. However, one of the problems with strapping is that it needs a health professional to apply it regularly and therefore it is not really a long-term solution. A new strapping device has been developed which people can apply themselves, or with minimal help, at home. The researchers are trying to see if this device can help with pain and function after [vertebral fracture](#).

Professor Palmer added, "The manufacturers of the new strapping device claim that it can improve posture, control movement of the spine and reduce pain. It therefore seems to have the potential to be useful for people with osteoporotic vertebral fractures. But we need to conduct independent research to verify the claims.

"We will therefore ask 20 people to use the device at home for four weeks and another 20 people to simply continue with usual care. Which option people receive will be decided completely at random. We will ask all patients to complete short questionnaires about their pain, function and quality of life to see if there are any benefits of the new device."

Provided by University of the West of England

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